

April 5, 2013

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am submitting testimony in favor of raised bill 6682, An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel. My name is Carolyn Goodridge, and I am the legislative advocate for the CT Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents. I am also a member of the Keep the Promise Coalition, Children's Committee.

Bill 6682 addresses the fact that many schools have police (Resource officers) stationed in them without any formal guidelines governing daily interactions. Without any formal guidance on day to day operations, police presence often leads to unnecessary criminalization students or escalation of behaviors that might otherwise be defused. With more police presence in the schools, children, especially children of color, are ending up in the Justice System. When arrests occur for non-violent, non-dangerous offenses, such as disorderly conduct, children are in the justice system when the conduct could have been managed within the school's own disciplinary system. Arresting children at school harms both the children and the community. Keeping children in school is crucial to improving their long-term opportunities, and they are then less likely to use illegal substances, become pregnant, or engage in violent behavior because they feel connected to their school.

Bill 6682 would promote and facilitate collaboration and communication between schools and the police stationed in them. It would require a formal Memorandum of Agreement detailing the roles and responsibilities of the police in the schools. Similar agreements have been used nationally and in Connecticut. The agreements would ensure that student and police interactions are handled in a **consistent manner**. This bill would also provide the communities with better data about school-based arrests through the well-known format of the strategic school profiles. This data will help Connecticut communities keep kids in school and out of the juvenile justice system.

Thank you for your time.